

## Journal of Western Archives

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Volume 3 | Issue 1

Article 4

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2012

# Review of The Lone Arranger: Succeeding in a Small Repository

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### Recommended Citation

Passehl, Erin (2012) "Review of The Lone Arranger: Succeeding in a Small Repository," *Journal of Western Archives*: Vol. 3 : Iss. 1 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/westernarchives/vol3/iss1/4>

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## Review of *The Lone Arranger: Succeeding in a Small Repository*

By Christina Zamon, ed. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2012.  
157 pp. Soft cover. \$69.95. ISBN 1-931666-41-5

*The Lone Arranger: Succeeding in a Small Repository* serves as a welcome pep talk for solo professionals before the big game of managing small repositories of all shapes and missions. Working alone in archives can be tough in many ways – there are fewer opportunities to network with colleagues, there is no one to bounce ideas off of, and priorities constantly change. Many small repositories are overburdened with work. Budgets are tight and it may not be possible to attend conferences, go to workshops, or seek out professional development opportunities. In support of these individuals and situations, *The Lone Arranger* supplies valuable coaching and best practices to help overcome the daily challenges of “flying solo” in small repositories.

Editor Christina Zamon, herself a lone arranger for almost a decade, has helped others working alone in small shops through her work with the SAA Lone Arrangers Roundtable. Zamon defines a *lone arranger* as “an individual who works alone or with only part-time or volunteer staff”. Much like the “The Lone Ranger” found in popular culture, an archival lone arranger is faced with the challenges of limited resources and allies, and tasked with doing good. The book is not only aimed at professionals trained as archivists, but includes the “large percentage of archives in the United States that are often underrepresented and overlooked,” those that are managed by people with no archival training or would not consider themselves to be archivists. A major strength of the book is that it cuts across all archival environments and includes examples from academic, corporate, government, religious, library and museums, and historical society settings.

Zamon approached the book from a practical standpoint by focusing on day-to-day concerns that face the lone arranger. The book’s seven chapters reflect issues such as administration, collections management, information technology, fundamental archival programs, facilities management and disaster planning, budgeting, and finances. Each chapter contains key terms and definitions, figures pulled with examples from real-life archives, and case studies. Common themes running through the book that embody characteristics crucial to the success of solo archivists include: time management, policy creation, collection management, basic essential programs, collaboration, fostering good relationships, and being a strong advocate for the archives.

As a lone arranger myself, I found certain chapters of the book to be particularly useful: Chapter 1 provides a solid framework for thinking about the role of a lone

arranger and what one can realistically accomplish when working alone. Chapter 2 focuses on collection management, an area where many questions typically surface, including internal and external acquisitions, collection and gift policies, organization and appraisal of materials, and processing. Chapter 6 focuses on reference and outreach and provides sound tools to create and use in managing internal and external reference requests, advocacy, and outreach through exhibits, instruction, and community outreach.

My favorite parts of the book (and the most practical) were the examples of policies and guidelines and the dozen 1-2 page case studies from professionals working in different archival environments. The case studies provided expertise and unique ideas while providing assurance and confidence to lone arrangers. Two appendices are included in this book: Appendix A is a list of selected readings that provide both theoretical and hands-on information that includes books, articles, manuals, reports, field guides, and handbooks. Appendix B is a resources guide that lists national and regional organizations, online manuals, and resources organized by chapter themes.

This book is highly recommended for people new to the archival profession or those who have not worked in small repositories before. It provides a useful starting point and acts as a reference tool for people charged with preserving records, archival materials, and cultural heritage resources. This work may not resonate as well with more seasoned solo professionals already familiar with many of the concepts presented in *The Lone Arranger*; however, that was not the author's intended audience. The book also serves to validate many of the efforts archives have already undertaken as well as a way to discover new efficiencies. *The Lone Arranger* successfully fulfills a niche often overlooked in archives and is a welcome addition to the archives toolkit and professional literature.

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